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Women's Health Month *Initiative Focused on 'Powerful Mind, Strong Body'*

By Bernard S. Little
WRNMMC Public
Affairs staff writer

May is Women's Health Month with a focus on the theme "Powerful Mind, Strong Body."

"As the roles of women in the Army, and workforce in general, continue to expand, it is imperative that we bring women's health to the forefront of our military health-care system," Lt. Gen. Patricia D. Horoho, the Army's first female surgeon general, stated.

"Over the past three years, my key focus to improve the health of our beneficiaries has centered on concepts of wellness and disease prevention. Within the concept of Litespace, we have an initiative called the Performance Triad that promotes healthy behaviors and informed decisions. The three pillars of the Triad are sleep, activity and nutrition – a focus on sleeping well (eight hours of quality sleep per 24 hour period); being active (taking at least 10,000 steps per day; including resistance training two or more days per week; incorporating at least 150 minutes of moderate or greater intensity aerobic exercise per week); and eating better. When they all work together, they generate a positive and synergistic effort on health," Horoho continued.

"Women's health and our health-care system are dependent upon healthier lifestyle behaviors and highly-aware practitio-

ners, who are committed to systemic sustainable changes that will improve our provision of health and wellness programs and medical practice," she concluded.

The number of women serving in the armed forces, as well as the number of women veterans, is steadily rising, which has contributed to increased focus on women's health issues within the military, according to Department of Defense (DOD) officials.

"Disease prevention and management are tremendously important," said Army Lt. Col. Nicole Powell-Dunford, Office of The Surgeon General Women's Health consultant. "Women's health means optimized performances in the workplace and in the Litespace... Women's health impacts the [services] as a whole, as well as the psychological well-being of partners, spouses, children and parents within our communities. On a global scale, women's health has a profound impact on regional security and stability, with direct implications for U.S. military involvement. In short women's health matters – within our [military], within our communities and on the international stage," she added.

At Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the nation's flagship military health-care facility, there are a number of programs to assist women in building powerful minds and strong bodies. One such



Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Christopher Krucke

Female service members and civilians participate in a special hospital-wide run for staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center May 20.

program is the Integrative Cardiac Health Project (ICHP), developed in 1999 at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center as a result of a 10-year research grant. The project's mission is to reduce cardiovascular disease and chronic illness among DOD beneficiaries.

ICHP coordinators explain that the program's interdisciplinary team focuses on a number of care and prevention practices for heart disease and diabetes. Nurse practitioners, cardiologists, sleep and stress reduction specialists, registered dietitians and health coaches combine to implement ICHP. For more information concerning the program, call 301-400-1111, or visit www.ichpcenter.org.

Also available to all federal employee WRNMMC staff members is the

Employee Assistance Program, which promotes the well-being of employees by helping them with a number of challenges, job-related and otherwise. For more information, visit WRNMMC's EAP webpage, <https://www.wrnmmc.intranet.capmed.mil/programs/empassist> or go to FOH www.FOH4You.com to access additional resources. To make a confidential EAP appointment with a licensed counselor call 1-800-222-0364 (or 888-262-7848 if you are hearing-impaired). Call anytime – EAP is available 24/7.

WRNMMC nutritionists are also available to help beneficiaries build powerful bodies and minds through healthy eating. For more information, contact the Outpatient Nutrition Clinic at 301-295-4065 to schedule an

appointment with a registered dietician.

The John P. Murtha Cancer Center (MCC), also at WRNMMC, is DOD's only Center of Excellence in Cancer Care and provides world-class diagnosis and treatment of cancers, including breast cancer – the most common form of cancer in women, according to the MCC's Breast Care Center.

"The most important things a person can do to reduce their risk for breast cancer is to limit daily alcohol intake to one drink per day, maintain an active lifestyle by exercising, maintain a healthy weight and eat a healthy diet," according to WRNMMC clinical genetic nurse, Anne Forsha. Women should also do monthly breast self-exams. For more information about breast cancer prevention, call

the Breast Care Center at 301-295-3899.

According to Military Health System (MHS) officials, other common health issues female service members, family members, and retirees should be aware of include menopause, pregnancy, reproductive health, uterine diseases and sexual related health issues.

- Women who are pregnant or are planning to get pregnant can help give babies a healthy start with regular visits to health-care providers, MHS officials advise.

- An early sign of uterine disease may be bleeding between periods or after sex. Causes of abnormal bleeding include hormones, thyroid problems, fibroids, polyps, cancer, infection or pregnancy.

- Reproductive health issues can impact fertility, overall health and a person's ability to enjoy a sexual relationship; therefore it's important women have regular visits to their health-care provider.

The Army hosts the Women's Health Portal, designed to provide service members, leaders and family members with up-to-date information about a variety of women's health topics including health and wellness, self-care, and health considerations for the deployed environment. To learn more, please visit: <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/default.aspx>.

WRNMMC CMC's Column

Last weekend we began the annual 101 Critical Days of Summer, the annual campaign focused on increasing and maintaining our safety at work and play, which lasts through the Labor Day weekend.

It is typically during the 101 Critical Days of Summer mishaps tend to increase because of the rise in outdoor activities.

We at Walter Reed Bethesda are family, and as a family it is important we look out for each other at all times because we cannot afford to lose any one of our family members to a preventable accident. This is why it is important we remain safety vigilant not only during the 101 Critical Days of Summer, but each and every day of the year. What We Do Matters.

It's also important we are frequently reminded of the components of the 101 Critical Days of Summer, which include wearing seatbelts; not drinking and driving; practicing water safety when swimming and boating; remaining hydrated by drinking water to avoid heat injury; and adhering to other measures designed to prevent accidents and injuries.

Oftentimes when bad things happen, alcohol is involved. This is another area in which we need to look out for one another. Alcohol-involvement is one of the key factors in sexual harassment and sexual assault, which are absolutely unacceptable in our military and within our Walter Reed Bethesda family.

We also have many motorcyclists in our Walter Reed Bethesda family, and it's important for them to be visible (use reflective strips or decals on clothing and motorcycles, as well as flash the brake light when slowing down and before stopping); dress for safety (helmet, eye protection, leather or other synthetic, protective clothing, long sleeves and pants, over-the ankle boots and gloves); and give yourself space (people driving cars often don't see motorcycles and if they do, they may not be able to properly judge speed).

Bicyclists should also wear similar personal protective equipment, as well as use lights and reflectors to see and be seen.



Command Master Chief Tyrone Willis, WRNMMC

Distracted driving is another challenge on roadways. It is against the law for the operator of a motor vehicle to talk or text on a cell phone while the vehicle is in motion. An exception is for hands-free devices or hands-free operating mode. Also, if you travel long distances by car, take frequent breaks.

Protective gear, such as eye protection, ear plugs, gloves, long-sleeved shirts and pants, as well as heavy-duty, non-slip shoes should also be worn when using a lawn mower and doing yard work.

To remain cool with the increase in temperatures, many of us will be taking to swimming pools and beaches. With that in mind, remember to never swim alone, even if you are an experienced swimmer; swim only at supervised areas; never swim when exhausted, overheated or immediately after eating; before diving, make sure the water is deep enough; and don't depend on a tube or inflated toy for buoyancy.

Another activity which should always be done outdoors and with caution is grilling. If you do so, remember to choose a safe grilling location away from children's play areas and areas of heavy traffic; the area should be well-ventilated to avoid the danger from carbon monoxide and other combustion byproducts; never grill inside or even in a semi-enclosed area such as a tent or camper; and always grill on a flat, stable platform.

Also during the overly hot, humid days, make sure to stay hydrated and limit intense, outdoor exercise. Focus on replacing lost salt and minerals with water and sports drinks and avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

It is also important to recognize the signs of heatstroke and heat exhaustion. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fatigue, heavy sweating, confusion, extreme thirst, dizziness, cramps and nausea are all symptoms and must be taken seriously.

No matter the activity, practicing safety and responsibility has a direct effect on mission requirements each and every day. Remember, we are family at Walter Reed Bethesda, and as family, it's important we look out for one another. We are...Walter Reed Bethesda!

Bethesda Notebook

Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The Multicultural Committee at Walter Reed Bethesda will host a program in observance of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month today at 11:30 a.m. in Bldg. 19, 1st floor in the piano area. The program will feature a performance by the Natananjali School of Dance. Everyone is invited to attend.

Birth Month Training

Birth month training for Army, Navy and civilian personnel at Walter Reed Bethesda is held every second and fourth Thursday of each month in Clark Auditorium beginning at 8 a.m. Training sessions include personal finance and stress management; sexual harassment; suicide awareness and prevention; customer service; threat awareness and counterintelligence; as well as drug and alcohol prevention education.

Employer Network Event

An Employer Network Event is held monthly on the last Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Bldg. 11 (lower level), Room 16. Attendees will be able to meet with industry representatives, develop professional connections and explore employment opportunities at the event, open to all active duty, family members, veterans, reservists, non-medical attendees, contractors and civilians. No registration is required. For more information, contact Fleet and Family Support Center at 301-319-4087 or email FFSC@med.navy.mil.

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Food, Fun Found at New NSAB Snack Bar

By Andrew Damstedt
NSAB Public Affairs
staff writer

Ask any Spinz employee to name a favorite dish at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda Bowling Center's new snack bar, and they'll start ticking off several items.

Mac and cheese bites, a Spinz steak sub, nachos made from fried flour tortillas, Genovese pizza, the Santa Fe black bean burger, wings, hot dog sliders - and the list can go on for a while.

"It's not just regular bowling alley food; it's good cuisine," said Spinz employee Akiti Lee-Smalley.

Spinz' main goal as the newest dining option on the installation is to get people to try out their spin on the traditional snack bar menu. That's why they offer samples during league nights and are planning to go around to various offices on base to offer samples, said Spinz manager Bill O'Donnell.

"You get people who look at the menu and they have this (hesitation and say) 'I don't know,'" he said. "We're trying to get the food in their hands so they can say 'Ah yeah, okay, I can do this.'"



Photo by Andrew Damstedt

Spinz employee Akiti Lee-Smalley takes out a pizza from the pizza oven at the new snack bar at Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Bowling Center. A grand opening for the new snack bar is planned for June 2 at 11 a.m.

The food is made fresh and prepared at the beginning of the day, he said.

"Everything comes out hot, fresh and ready to go," O'Donnell said. "And I like the fact that it is a little different and you're building on

your normal snack food items and you're taking it to another level."

Each employee adds their personal touch when preparing the dishes, said Spinz employee Jamie Stoneburner, describing his own style of laying out the

toppings on the various pizzas.

"I love attention to detail; I want it to look, well, different," he said.

O'Donnell said having a good rapport among Spinz employees not only helps with off-setting the tight quarters, but

pays off in getting customers to come back.

"If they're happy with their job, we're always going to work well," O'Donnell said. "And then that whole attitude goes outward and the customer starts seeing how much we enjoy our job and then they love to come here, because it's a fun place. That's the key. You don't see a lot of that anymore."

Spinz opened April 24 and O'Donnell said they have been attracting more customers each week. A grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for June 2 at 11 a.m. and will feature giveaways and food sampling.

Coming for the food is one draw, but O'Donnell said they want to make Spinz a recreational opportunity for people on base. In the near future, a lounge will be built by removing four lanes. Also, he said he wants to have more entertainment this summer on the patio.

"I would like to think of it not just as a dining option but as a place to actually come out and relax also - whether bowling or just coming in to have a conversation or get together with the office," he said. "We're one of the few open in the evenings - Friday and Saturday late."

Mental Health Awareness Month

WRNMMC Offers Services For Wellness

By Bernard S. Little
WRNMMC Public Affairs
staff writer

For more than 60 years, May has been nationally recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month, according to Military Health System (MHS) officials.

Mental wellness is essential for peak cognitive and physical performance, in addition to ensuring the readiness of service members, MHS officials said. They added that mental wellness is not only important for service members, but for their families, retirees and Department of Defense (DOD) civilians as well.

"Mental health can be defined many ways, but generally, mental health is a subjective sense of well-being that includes a sense of competence, independence, effectiveness and contentment in one's life," explained Mark Simpson, Ph.D.,

deputy chief of the Department of Psychology at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

"Mental health comes with feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction with personal goals, relationships, career and a sense of life," Simpson continued.

He added WRNMMC Director Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Jeffrey B. Clark's prosperity plan and workbook "are excellent examples of goal setting and planning to help people achieve both positive health and mental health. People who set goals, work to achieve them and have strong support systems, tend to be more resilient during times of stress and setback.

To help people achieve mental health, Resiliency and Psychological Health Service, an interdisciplinary service, is open to active duty, civilians, contractors and other personnel at WRNMMC. The service is de-

signed to foster an environment of recovery, growth and adaptation under challenging circumstances through programs and services that promote health and wellness, Simpson explained. Resiliency and Psychological Health Services can be reached at 301-400-1974.

In addition, the Adult Behavioral Health Clinic provides individual and group counseling programs, psychological and psychiatric services for all WRNMMC beneficiaries and can be reached at 301-295-0500.

The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service provides individual and family therapy, parenting support and psychiatric medication services to youth 18 and under and their families. For more information, call 301-295-0576.

Many have viewed seeking help for mental wellness as a "career ender," but Simpson explained just the opposite may be the case.

"In fact, if you are struggling with depression, anger, sub-



Courtesy Graphic

stance use issues, post-traumatic stress or other emotional challenges, not seeking assistance may be much more likely to end a career or even worse, a life," Simpson explained.

"Unaddressed problems often lead to incidents, such as fighting, DUI, domestic violence, disciplinary issues and more," Simpson continued.

He added that depression, post-traumatic stress and other concerns have many effective treatments, but often may not

improve significantly without care.

"Given service members' incredible dedication and sacrifice to the mission, each branch of the armed forces has taken great strides to ensure personnel have access to quality mental health care without consequence," Simpson said. "Voluntary treatment for mental health concerns is private and confidential, and is geared toward assisting the service member to maintain or return to full duty."

A Creative Craft: Staff Member Makes Prosthetic Eyes

By Sarah Marshall
WRNMMC Public
Affairs staff writer

Louis Gilbert has a specialized skill – one you wouldn't expect to find in hospital dentistry.

Working in the dental laboratory at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the retired Navy dental technician creates hand-made, lifelike prosthetic eyes.

While on active duty, Gilbert received training in maxillofacial prosthetics at the Naval Postgraduate Dental School (NPDS). The craft involves creating prosthetic replacements for human ears, noses and other facial parts missing due to birth defects, cancer, combat or trauma, he explained. He completed the six-month NPDS maxillofacial laboratory prosthodontics course in 2000. The course enabled him to expound upon his

dental technician skills, while learning the ins and outs of painting and creating facial prosthetics, which happens to involve using the same materials as those used to make dentures.

Though he learned to master the various aspects of maxillofacial prosthodontics, Gilbert said he was very interested in “mastering the eyes.”

“It was more appealing to me. It was more creative,” he explained, as he has always loved art.

After retiring from a 20-year military career, Gilbert began working as a Department of Defense civilian in 2006 at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Now at WRNMMC, Gilbert continues working with other skilled anaplastologists who specialize in producing and fitting facial prosthetics. The team decided they would each concentrate

on a particular aspect of their trade, with Gilbert focusing primarily on prosthetic eyes, or ocular prosthetics. His colleagues have mastered silicone work, while others are able to make “specialized” eyes, which may include a Marine emblem, or sports team logo, superimposed on the iris of a prosthetic eye. Patients have even asked for glow-in-the-dark prosthetic eyes.

Gilbert explained he and his colleagues often must “create something from nothing. That’s the beauty of it. You have to be creative.”

The entire process of making a prosthetic eye typically takes about eight hours, he said. Also referred to as an ocularist, Gilbert begins by making an impression of the eye socket, where the eye is missing. He uses an alginate, or wax-like casting material, to make the impression, which he can



Photo by Beverli Alford

Louis Gilbert, an anaplastologist in the dental laboratory at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center paints a dark brown iris onto a small round canvas, which will later be attached to the mold.

heat up and re-shape during the fitting process, if need be, he said. He will later use this impression to make a mold of the eye.

Gilbert then sits in front of the patient, and using the remaining eye as a guide, paints on an exact replica of the patient's iris on a small “canvas,” a round circular fabric, about the size of a pinky nail. He might also use a photo of the patient's remaining eye as a guide. He makes sure to capture every intricate detail of the iris, using oil-based paints. He also measures the patient's iris and pupil, on the remaining eye, to ensure the prosthetic matches.

Once he's finished painting the iris, he superimposes a “pupil” on top of the iris. A small, round, acrylic dome is then placed over the iris and pupil, magnifying the colors. Together, the pupil and iris are attached to the mold. Gilbert then inserts the mold into the eye socket to check the alignment of the iris. He calls this part of the process “setting the gaze,” making sure the iris is aligned properly.

He completes the mold by painting the sclera, the white part of the eye. He has about a dozen shades of acrylic paint to choose from for this part of the eye, including dark grays, yellows and different

shades of white. He then uses red strands of thread to create veins in the eye, and finally, he adds a clear coat over the eye to seal the prosthetic.

The goal is to make the eye as natural and normal as possible, he said, and to be the most comfortable for the patient.

If there is no damage to the muscles behind the eye, then the prosthetic eye should still be able to move normally as well, he noted.

Gilbert will continue to see his patients within the months following his work on the prosthetic eye to ensure proper fit, as post-surgery swelling continues to go down. Long term, patients usually return about once a year for polishing, and to ensure the eye still fits properly.

Some eyes are more challenging, he added, such as if an individual has a unique eye color, but the hard work pays off. “It's an incredible feeling to see the look on a person's face when they see themselves in the mirror for the first time with their new eye,” he said.

“It's exciting because I'm making them feel whole again,” Gilbert added. “This is absolutely the best job. It's really rewarding.”

About a year ago, Gilbert made a prosthetic

eye for Jeannette Nunez shortly after her left eye was removed due to complications with glaucoma. Since childhood, she has struggled with the disease that damages the eye's optic nerve, which connects the retina to the brain.

“My entire life, doctors had been telling me, one day we're going to have to take that eye out,” Nunez explained. Knowing that day was coming did not make it any easier. That day came on March 17, 2014. What did make it more pleasant was her experience at WRNMMC, and working with Gilbert, she explained.

Six weeks after her surgery, she met the ocularist, and she was “instantly pleased,” with his knowledge and his attention, she said. Nunez didn't feel rushed by Gilbert, she continued. She explained he took the time to understand her concerns, and walk her through the process. When it came to making an impression of her socket, he made sure she knew step by step what was going to happen next.

Prior to her eye surgery, Nunez said she felt a veil of insecurity, feeling she was “different.” Her parents raised her to be strong, and independent – and for the first time

See EYES page 6

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Makeup Lessons Serve as a Thank You to Military Women

By Andrew Damstedt
NSAB Public Affairs
staff writer

If one happened to walk inside the Navy Exchange onboard Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) May 19 it might have been easy to mistake the front of the store for the backstage of a New York fashion show because of the several women in makeup chairs, bright lights and photographers taking pictures.

Instead of a fashion show, however, 10 makeup artists were teaching women how to wear the Bobbi Brown Cosmetics line – overseen by a visit by founder Bobbi Brown, who said providing these lessons was her way to say thank you to the military.

“When I go into a store, I bring the artists so they teach the woman how to use the makeup,” Brown said. “It’s not about how good the artists are – it’s about how well they teach the women

to do their own makeup.”

Brown said she enjoyed meeting the service members and other individuals who came to the event.

“It’s actually a very emotional day when I meet all the women – service women, married to – or children of – (military),” Brown said. “I believe that a lot of America doesn’t always realize and can take (service members) for granted ... these returning veterans exist and they need our support.”

NSAB’s Navy Exchange was the first military base to have a Bobbi Brown Cosmetics counter, which opened two years ago, so Brown decided to make NSAB her first visit to a military base.

NSAB Navy Exchange cosmetic manager Nicole Harvin said her department was happy that Brown decided to visit and described Brown’s the line as natural.

“The best part of it is that her brand is geared toward just enhancing what you already have – that’s what she

believes in – so it keeps you very natural and just makes you a little bit better,” Harvin said. “It makes you feel better about yourself.”

Sharon Glenn, Navy Exchange soft line division manager, said Brown’s visit was exciting and she was hopeful Brown would visit the store again.

“She has a look that is very clean, natural, fresh – not a lot of drama,” Glenn said of the cosmetic line. “So it’s an everyday look that will carry you from morning until evening.”

Brown said her brand was developed as a way to “empower women to give confidence and boost self-esteem and I don’t care what you do for a living, every woman wants to look better and feel better. It is really about confidence.”

And no matter what a woman is experiencing in her life, she said, “makeup is an easy way to make you feel better, no matter what.”



Photo by Andrew Damstedt

A woman gets a makeup consultation at the Navy Exchange onboard Naval Support Activity Bethesda May 19 during the visit of makeup artist Bobbi Brown, not pictured, who provided the lessons as a way to say thank you to the military.

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Be Safe with Diabetes and Summer Travel

By **Asha Jain MA, RD, CDE**
Outpatient Nutrition Services, WRNMMC

Diabetes does not stay at home; it goes wherever you go. Even though you may be diabetic, you can go wherever you want to go and do whatever you would like to do as long as you remember one thing – plan ahead. It just takes a little planning to handle your diabetes. How you prepare depends on where you’re going and for how long. Two weeks backpacking through Europe requires different planning than a week at the beach. Will you be crossing time zones? What kind of food will you eat, and when? Will you be more active or less active than usual? Do you know how to make healthy food choices when eating in restaurants?

Food is one of life’s necessities and eating is one of life’s greatest pleasures for many people. When traveling to other parts of the world, experimenting with regional foods or local cuisines, experiencing different food customs or even visiting relatives who make your favorite desserts, sticking to your meal plan can be especially adventurous and challenging at times. What can you do? Take these steps to maintain target blood glucose levels. • Never take your pre-meal insulin unless your meal is in front of you. Otherwise, a delay in the meal could lead to low blood glucose. To be safe, always carry some food with you. If your meal is delayed or an order is mixed up, you won’t be stuck with an empty stomach. • Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages

to minimize the effects of “jet lag.” • Take action breaks when flying or traveling by bus or train. These breaks can include walking in the aisles every two hours. If you drive, take breaks to stretch or walk at rest stops or when getting gas. • Carry hard candies or glucose tablets for treatment of hypoglycemia. • Take along snacks when hiking or sightseeing. Don’t assume you will be able to find food. Carry non-perishable snack foods such as cheese with crackers, peanut butter with crackers and dry fruits. • Meal replacement bars and/or snack bars are good to carry for delayed meals or skipped meals. • Avoid tap water overseas. This includes ice cubes made from tap water.

- Ask for an ingredient list for unfamiliar foods. Some foods may upset your stomach and hurt your diabetes control.
- Test your blood glucose after you’ve eaten any foods that you’re not used to eating.
- Eat something, a meal or a snack, about every four to five hours.
- If the big meal of the day will be served late at night, you may want to eat a snack at your usual supper time, and omit your bedtime snack.
- Make requests. Can food be grilled instead of fried? Can an item or ingredient be switched? Can sauces, gravies, and dressings be served on the side?
- Plan to split the main dish with your companion to avoid taking home leftovers.
- Avoid buffets unless you know you can resist eating too much.
- Fast food does not



Courtesy Graphic

have to be fat food. The ground rules of healthy and good nutrition still apply when you order from the drive-thru. • In some parts of the world, breakfast is very light so you may want to have something extra to add to it. • If you get sick, ask your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes educator about taking your medicines (insulin or pills). No matter what kind of diabetes you have, it’s smart to watch what you eat and drink when traveling.

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EYES

Continued from pg. 4

in her life after the surgery, with her identical, dark brown eyes, she said, she has confidence in saying, “I believe what was instilled in me ... That was a revelation for me.”

A TEAM EFFORT

In this highly specialized craft, Gilbert works closely with anaplastologists Gwen Guildford and Robert Robinson. The three have crossed paths over the years, each taking the maxillofacial course at NPDS, and each having served at one point on active duty at the former National Naval Medical Center. They each continue to do dental work as well, creating dental implants and dentures. They agreed, their “hearts belong here,” and they go out of their way to ensure their patients are happy.

“It’s a small group, as far as those of us in the field,” said Robinson, who is the “go to” for silicone work. He creates facial prosthetics, such as nasal, facial, or ear prosthetics, using various forms of silicone to create life-like textures on the prosthetic. He’s been doing anaplastology for 17 years, and prosthetics for 25 years. He agreed, it is “heart-warming to see how [a patient] reacts when [he or she] looks in the mirror for the first time with whatever we’re able to make for [the patient].”

Guilford, laboratory manager, echoed similar sentiments. “We take great pride in making sure our patients are happy – that’s most important.”

The anaplastologist creates special-

ized eyes, or as she likes to call them “silly eyes.” In terms of these eyes, she said, “Basically anything they want, they can get here.”

Once Gilbert finishes making a mold to fit the patient’s socket, and creates their natural looking eye, Guilford crafts the iris with a specialized design, be it a Purple Heart, Ranger emblem, diamonds, or a flower.

She recalls making a Captain America eye for Sgt. Thomas Block, who was severely injured Oct. 5, 2013. While on patrol with fellow Rangers in southern Afghanistan, an insurgent detonated a bomb strapped to her body, throwing him back 35 feet into a minefield. He lost his right eye, but retained vision in his left eye. He also had his ocular bone, nose and cheekbone rebuilt.

Block was not aware they could make such life-like prosthetic eyes, and was particularly surprised to learn the work takes place in a dental lab. He asked for the Captain America shield, because it was already in the shape of a circle, like an iris, and the symbol seemed patriotic. He said he enjoys seeing others react to his eye, especially kids. “They get really excited about it.”

As he always strives to be a role model, and do what’s right for his family, friends and his country, he said, “[The Captain America eye] gives me a standard to uphold.”

Block also expressed his appreciation for the “amazing care” he’s received from the team in the dental lab.

“They work really well together,” he said. “They make it easy for me, the patient, to feel comfortable wearing this prosthetic. They’re here for us.”

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